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# Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

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**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women**
**Seventieth session**

**Summary record of the 1605th meeting**
Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Wednesday, 4 July 2018, at 3 p.m.

*Chair*: Ms. Leinarte

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Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention (*continued*)

*Eighth periodic report of Cyprus* (*continued*)

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*The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.*

**Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention** (*continued*)

*Eighth periodic report of Cyprus* (*continued*) (CEDAW/C/CYP/8; CEDAW/C/CYP/Q/8 and CEDAW/C/CYP/Q/8/Add.1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Cyprus took places at the Committee table.*

*Articles 10 to 14*

2. **Ms. Gbedemah** said it was regrettable that the improved performance of women and girls in secondary and higher education over the past decade had not translated into higher remuneration for women in the labour force. While women accounted for between 40 and 50 per cent of those with a university or postgraduate degree, the percentage of female PhD holders was much lower. It would be helpful to have information on the dropout rates of women and girls to complement the information on enrolment rates provided in the State party report (CEDAW/C/CYP/8, paras. 106 and 107). In its concluding observations from the last reporting cycle (CEDAW/C/CO/6-7), the Committee had recommended that the State party should diversify the professional choices available to women, especially towards non-traditional fields. She would be interested to know what action had been taken in that regard and what the outcome had been.

3. Noting the underrepresentation of women in engineering and similar fields, she wondered whether the State party would consider adopting temporary special measures as part of its initiatives in that area. Combating gender stereotypes was a key factor. She wished to know whether the Education Action Plan for the period 2014–2017, which had focused on eliminating stereotypes, had been evaluated; and what other concrete measures had been adopted to intensify those efforts. It would be useful to have information about how the Government monitored sexual harassment in educational institutions, which was another area of concern, including details of the number of complaints and the penalties imposed.

4. She would welcome information on the steps taken to remove the linguistic barriers faced by girls from ethnic minorities, and on the results of such efforts. It would also be interesting to know what alternatives had been put forward in the light of the decision not to establish a school with Turkish as the main language of instruction, owing to the lack of support from parents in Limassol. Lastly, she invited the delegation to explain why religious education remained compulsory, despite the Committee on the Rights of the Child's recommendation that it be made optional (CRC/C/CYP/CO/3-4, para. 45), and why important components such as gender equality and gender aspects were excluded from sex education curricula.

5. **Ms. Jahan** said that women continued to face workplace segregation and to experience discrimination in recruitment, career advancement, employment conditions and pay. Nonetheless, it was encouraging that one of the objectives of the National Action Plan on Gender Equality for 2018–2021 was to promote equality between men and women in employment. She wished to know what targeted measures were being considered to increase the participation of women in formal labour markets and, in particular, to address gender segregation, including in higher skilled occupations; and what temporary special measures, quotas or other methods were being used to attract women into traditionally male-dominated professions. Given the low number of women in senior managerial positions, including in university teaching and administrative positions and on private sector boards, she would also appreciate further information on the steps being taken to improve the career prospects of women, such as educational and training schemes. What measures were in place to enhance self-employment opportunities, especially among women in rural areas and in lower income brackets? And were there any special provisions to help bring women with disabilities into employment?

6. Although the legal framework enshrined the right to equal pay for work of equal value among men and women, the considerable and persistent wage gap, particularly in the

private sector, suggested a need to strengthen the enforcement of employment laws. She would therefore like to know what monitoring mechanisms were in place to ensure effective implementation of the legislation; what legal action was taken when employers and companies were found to be in violation of those legal provisions; and what redress mechanisms were available. She would also be interested to learn what measures had been taken to bridge the pension gap between men and women, which was nearly 50 per cent, owing in part to the disproportionate number of women in part-time work.

7. In view of the large number of gender discrimination cases received by the Ombudsman from women who had been dismissed or denied promotions after becoming pregnant or upon returning from maternity leave, it would be helpful to know what remedies were available to working mothers to help them to ensure that their seniority and promotion opportunities were unaffected by their family situation. The problem was particularly acute among migrant workers, who were often unaware of their rights or afraid of retribution if they attempted to exercise them. Many women faced difficulties in reconciling childcare and career advancement. She wished to know what State support, such as affordable childcare facilities and nursing homes, was available to help women caring for dependents. She would also appreciate clarification as to whether parental leave was paid or unpaid. Lastly, noting that sexual harassment in the workplace remained a problem in spite of the institutional framework in place, she wondered whether the State party would consider introducing a comprehensive law on sexual harassment that contained clear provisions for prevention, prohibition, reporting, prosecution and redress.

8. Alternative reports had found that migrant women, particularly Muslim women who wore visible signs of their religious identity, frequently experienced discrimination in accessing employment. It would be helpful to know what measures had been taken to ensure that migrant women had discrimination-free access to employment opportunities in all sectors. Since the Committee and other treaty bodies had raised concerns regarding the precarious and vulnerable situation of domestic workers, the overwhelming majority of whom were migrant women, she would appreciate information as to how the Government guaranteed the employment rights of such workers and protected them from exploitation. Given that visa requirements for migrant workers tied them to their employers, what oversight and protection mechanisms were in place to prevent abuse of that situation?

9. **Ms. Arocha Domínguez**, noting that various special programmes to address the health-care needs of vulnerable groups had been launched to serve as a bridge to the national health insurance system due to be implemented in the near future, asked how the Government would ensure that the attendant benefits for vulnerable women would not be lost once the insurance system was fully operational. She wondered whether the new system had been designed with a gender-based approach and the Sustainable Development Goals in mind. It would also be interesting to learn how the health-care system as a whole would be prepared for the upcoming changes, particularly in terms of funding, working methods and human resources.

10. She wished to know whether the improved sex education curricula introduced in schools was complemented by appropriate health-care services, and whether such services were widely available. According to alternative sources, contraception was not affordable for many women and was not always available from public health institutions. She would appreciate the delegation's comments on the fact that many modern forms of contraception were not imported owing to commercial regulations. In view of the recent decriminalization of abortion, it would be useful to know whether the relevant regulations had been introduced; whether medical staff had received sufficient training and were ready to carry out the procedure; whether abortions would be available within the public health system in order to allow access for low-income women; and what would be done to address situations in which medical staff refused to carry out terminations.

11. She wished to know whether the last plan to prevent HIV transmission had been evaluated; what conclusions had been drawn; and whether the plan had since been updated. It would also be helpful to know about any programmes specifically targeting sectors of the population at particular risk of HIV infection. Could those groups access treatment without stigma?

12. **Ms. Koursoumba** (Cyprus) said that, in her personal view, the use of temporary special measures was tantamount to forcing women into careers that they did not want to pursue. Instead, the focus should be on combating stereotypes, raising awareness and empowering women to choose non-traditional careers.

13. Education was given in Greek. Most Turkish-speaking Cypriots attended English-speaking private schools. One primary school in Limassol taught Turkish-speaking children and employed two Turkish Cypriots. That school was assisted and monitored by the Cypriot Government. Overcoming language barriers was not the main issue; ensuring that students' needs were met was the overarching objective.

14. The teaching of the religion of the majority of Cypriots was compulsory in schools, although the Ministry of Education and Culture was aware that the country's Commissioner for Children's Rights had raised various objections to the status quo. However, since freedom of religion was protected under the Constitution and international treaties, children with different religious beliefs were entitled to attend alternative classes for which they were awarded equal credit. Oversight mechanisms were in place to safeguard the rights of such children.

15. Over the past five years, the authorities had attempted to introduce a comprehensive compulsory sex education programme in schools that was in line with the recommendations of the Commissioner for Children's Rights. However, a lack of skills training among educators had prevented the programme from being rolled out. The Ministry of Health, together with the Ministry of Education and Culture, had been working to develop a strategy for moving forward.

16. **Ms. Kyprianou** (Cyprus) said that research had been conducted to ascertain teachers' views on sex education. The results showed that educators did not feel equipped to teach the subject. Mandatory training programmes would therefore be introduced to prepare educators.

17. According to data for 2016/17 published by the Statistical Service of Cyprus, the majority of PhD and postgraduate degree holders in Cyprus were women. To address women's underrepresentation in fields such as engineering and architecture, the Ministry of Education and Culture planned to reshape vocational and secondary education courses to make them more attractive to girls and to design educational materials that were most effective in combating gender stereotypes among children from a young age. The Ministry also cooperated with the Department of Labour Relations and published teacher's manuals to promote gender equality. Universities were independent from the Ministry of Education and Culture but were nonetheless required to take action against sexual harassment under the National Action Plan on Gender Equality.

18. **Ms. Koursoumba** (Cyprus) said that migrant children and their families were given lessons in Greek to enable them to attend school with other children, although some consideration had been given to the possibility of providing classes for migrant children in their own language.

19. **Ms.** Natalia **Andreou** (Cyprus), referring Committee members to data included in the replies to the list of issues (CEDAW/C/CYP/Q/8/Add.1, para. 82) that attested to the decreasing gender pay gap, said that several measures had contributed to that achievement, including a review of collective agreements to eliminate direct or indirect discrimination, annual awareness-raising "Equal Pay Day" events that had received wide media coverage, and the distribution of detailed guides on equal pay legislation to more than 400 companies. Furthermore, inspectors had been granted powers to enter premises in order to investigate complaints of infringement of relevant legislation.

20. Migrant domestic workers in Cyprus were protected against discrimination and guaranteed equal treatment under the terms of the contracts signed between employer and employee. There was no collective agreement for domestic workers, but the terms and conditions of their contracts were overseen by the Ministry of Interior and were consistent with the terms and conditions contained in collective agreements applicable to both European Union and non-European Union nationals. Any employee could bring a claim before the Labour Disputes Court. In addition, a specific complaints mechanism was

available for workers in conflict with their employers, in Greek and English, that offered various solutions including mediation, employer penalties and the possibility of early release from contract. Since workplace health and safety laws were also applicable to domestic service, accidents and occupational illnesses affecting domestic workers could be investigated irrespective of the workers' immigration status. In fact, the authorities had prevented the deportation of a number of workers in order to obtain testimony from them that could be used to bring charges against employers at fault.

21. The Committee for Gender Equality in Employment and Vocational Training ran awareness-raising activities to address sexual harassment at work, besides providing assistance to victims. Codes of conduct for public sector employees had been drawn up by the Commissioner for Administration and Human Rights, in conjunction with the Committee, and codes for the private sector were currently being drafted. Paternity leave was remunerated, but parental leave, which employed parents were permitted to take until their child reached the age of eight years old, was not.

22. A new programme under which free oral contraception would be available to low-income women would be implemented in the near future. Significant progress had been made in AIDS prevention and treatment, and efforts were being made to improve public health surveillance in general. HIV care was provided free of charge in one dedicated clinic and provisions had been approved to provide financial support to people with HIV. All pregnant women were offered HIV testing and mother-to-child transmission rates were low.

23. **Ms. Gbedemah** said that the intention of temporary special measures in education was not to compel pupils to take specific courses but rather to nurture and encourage nascent interests. For example, girls would be more likely to pursue science disciplines if they knew about the possibility of obtaining scholarships. Incentives of that kind needed to be made available in order to make science and related subjects more attractive to girls. She invited the delegation to comment on information received from alternative sources which indicated that migrant students in Cyprus were not eligible for student grants at the tertiary level. If that was indeed the case, what could be done to remedy the situation?

24. **Ms. Jahan** said that it would be useful to know whether foreign domestic workers could change employer while their work permits were valid; whether they were allowed to join trade unions; and what mechanisms might be used to bring their wages into line with the national minimum, given that, according to alternative sources, at present their pay was considerably lower. She would also appreciate an explanation as to why the State party had not yet ratified the International Labour Organization (ILO) Private Employment Agencies Convention, 1997 (No. 181), given that ratification had apparently been considered and many of the Convention's provisions had seemingly already been implemented in Cyprus.

25. **Ms. Arocha Domínguez**, noting that many of her questions remained unanswered, said that she would particularly like to know whether the country's HIV programme had been evaluated, updated or extended. According to alternative sources, it had not. She also urged the delegation to provide the requested information about administrative and technical measures adopted to ensure the efficacy of the new regulations governing termination of pregnancy.

26. **Ms. Manalo**, noting that many women were now studying science, technology, engineering and mathematics, said that she wondered whether a similar gender balance had been achieved in humanities and social sciences: it was equally important that as many men as women studied humanities and social science subjects that encompassed topics such as religion, sexuality, language, ethics and values which were essential for all young persons' development. On a more general note, she asked whether the Government had conducted assessments of the strengths and weaknesses of all its policies and programmes, in accordance with each of the Convention's articles, with a view to eliminating weaknesses and building on strengths.

27. **Ms. Ameline** said that incentives and sometimes more binding measures needed to be applied in all countries in order to ensure an appropriate distribution of girls and boys across all sectors. In order to tackle the challenges posed by climate change and artificial intelligence, to give just two examples, good decision makers were as essential as good technicians. To ensure women's effective contribution to the world of the future, it was

important to remain vigilant, particularly in the digital field, and she urged the State party to position itself at the forefront in those efforts.

28. **Ms. Koursoumba** (Cyprus) said that the country would give serious consideration to the use of temporary special measures. She wished to highlight that a number of children from migrant backgrounds had excelled in their final secondary school examinations and had obtained further education scholarships. Foreign domestic workers could indeed change employer, subject to the terms and conditions of their contract.

29. With regard to termination of pregnancy, she acknowledged that the previous regulations, under which abortion had been authorized in certain specific circumstances only, had tended to be interpreted more liberally by private sector physicians than by those working in the public sector. However, since the new legislation made abortion legal for all women up to the twelfth week of pregnancy without exception, there was no reason why public health-care practitioners should not be ready to implement them. The effectiveness of the new legislation, which had taken effect just one month previously, would be assessed within the next two years.

30. **Ms.** Natalia **Andreou** (Cyprus) said that, following the removal of the contractual prohibition, foreign domestic workers could henceforth apply to become members of trade unions. There was no national minimum wage that covered every occupational category, nor any legislation regulating overtime pay: the terms for such pay had to be established within the framework of a personal or collective agreement between employer and employee. It was important to remember, however, that employers had to cover a number of their employees' costs, including accommodation, medical insurance, visas and repatriation costs. After careful examination, the Government had decided that it would reassess the possibility of ratifying the ILO Private Employment Agencies Convention periodically, with a view to finding the right time to proceed. The economic crisis had precluded progress to date, having given rise to other more pressing matters. Furthermore, ratifying the Convention presupposed an expense that would have to be assumed by domestic workers' employers.

31. In the absence of a delegation member representing the Ministry of Health, she could confirm that the universal health insurance system would cover all persons in Cyprus, irrespective of nationality, and would be paid for by employers and through taxes. Vulnerable groups' costs would be covered from State resources. The Government acknowledged that the gender pension gap was high, but it was on a downtrend. The gap was attributable to various factors — the fact that men began their retirement considerably later than women, the gender pay gap, the number of hours worked per week and the number of contributing years all contributed to pension outcomes — and should continue to narrow as those factors gradually moved in women's favour.

32. **Mr. Bergby**, noting that adequate State revenues were essential to fulfilment of treaty obligations and substantive equality for women, asked whether the country's tax system, which was designed to attract inward investment and foreign companies, could have implications for women's rights. In that context, and in line with the Committee's 2010 general recommendation No. 28, he wondered whether a review of the country's corporate, financial and tax legislation, policies and practices might be envisaged in order to ensure that women's rights were upheld domestically and abroad.

33. He was concerned that, according to reports, some insurance companies did not allow husbands to be covered under their wives' insurance policies. That practice seemed highly discriminatory and could prevent women from being heads of household. What would the State party do to ensure that such discriminatory provisions were eliminated? It also appeared that the country's businesses had not voluntarily adopted measures or policies to promote women's advancement into executive positions or onto company boards. Since it was vital, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals, that governments recognized the importance of increasing women's representation in decision-making as an instrument for development, it would be helpful to know more about what was being done to increase women's participation in the economy. Might the use of a quota system for corporate boards and decision-making positions be given further consideration?

34. Lastly, he was pleased to note that the Cyprus National Olympic Committee had established a training programme to empower women to participate more effectively in sports organizations' decision-making bodies. He asked whether such initiatives could be financed from public funds and whether the State party might consider financing scholarships or other incentives, possibly in conjunction with NGOs, both for women athletes and for women in decision-making roles.

35. **Ms. Haidar** said that further information on how the Government was planning to address the impact of climate change on agricultural production and rural women would be useful. In particular, she would like to know whether the Government had established a general plan on tackling the effects of climate change, a specific plan on mitigating its impact on women's rights and a specific government programme to assist rural women, including those who were active in the labour market.

36. She asked whether the Government would consider introducing tax incentives to encourage entrepreneurs to establish businesses and create employment in rural areas. It would be interesting to learn what steps were being taken to address disparities in the use of technology by women living in rural areas and those living in urban areas.

37. The Committee was concerned to note that, despite the various amendments made to the Refugee Law between 2002 and 2016, the Law did not yet provide for a gender-sensitive approach to the determination of asylum status and did not address the needs of survivors of sexual and gender-based violence. In the light of that situation, she asked whether any plans were in place to further amend the Refugee Law in order to protect refugee and stateless women against sexual and gender-based violence; and whether the Government planned to adopt the 1967 Protocol to the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees.

38. The wives of Cypriot and European Union citizens were granted a temporary residency permit that did not allow them to exercise their social, economic or political rights. In order to obtain such permits, the husbands of migrant women were required to provide a written declaration stating that they would be responsible for their wives' living costs and medical expenses, thus giving rise to a relationship of dependency between wives and husbands that sometimes entailed abuse and exploitation. Even when they held a residency permit, migrant women found it difficult to access the family courts or obtain legal aid. In view of that situation, she asked whether the Government would consider amending legislation on the status of migrant women in order to protect them from abuse and violence and to decrease their dependency on their partners. It would be interesting to learn whether any measures were in place to ensure access to justice for migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women and to address linguistic barriers by disseminating information, in different languages, on legal remedies and procedures.

39. **Ms. Koursoumba** (Cyprus) said that the Cyprus Football Association had launched a new project to encourage women to participate in football. Sports associations and clubs were funded by the Government and were required to promote the participation of all citizens, including women and girls, in sporting activities.

40. **Ms. Voskaridou** (Cyprus) said that volunteers working with Cyprus Civil Defence, 50 per cent of whom were women, were responsible for providing training and responding to disaster situations. Women members belonged to the departments of search and rescue, first aid, neighbourhood watch, welfare and communication. The risk communication strategy, which was still being developed, contained special provisions for persons belonging to vulnerable groups, including women, children, older persons and persons with disabilities. Similar provisions would be included in the risk reduction strategy, which was currently being drafted. Cyprus Civil Defence had conducted an assessment of the risks associated with climate change for the Climate Change Project and had begun collecting statistical data related to disasters from different governmental organizations. Efforts would be made to disaggregate the data on the basis of gender and membership of vulnerable groups.

41. When an asylum seeker applied for asylum, the Aliens and Immigration Unit completed a specific form with a view to identifying persons with special needs, including victims of torture and trafficking and pregnant women. On the basis of that information, the

Asylum Service proceeded to take a gender-sensitive approach to the assessment of asylum applications. Trained women officers who specialized in gender were assigned to such cases in collaboration with women interpreters, if deemed appropriate. The Asylum Service circulated written information to the police and the Department of Labour with a view to identifying vulnerable persons as early as possible in the procedure. All the services involved were required to inform the Asylum Service if they identified an applicant with special needs, so that they could be provided with medical and psychological care. Relevant training and guidelines were systematically provided to the staff concerned. All asylum seekers were entitled to work in agriculture, manufacturing, waste management and construction, among other areas. A co-funded project had been established to provide legal aid to undocumented migrants through non-governmental organizations.

42. **Ms.** Niki **Andreou** (Cyprus) said that the Government recognized the significant role played by rural women in the development of rural areas and their contribution to the eradication of poverty and hunger. For that reason, measures had been taken to ensure that rural women did not face discrimination and were given the support that they needed to remain in the countryside. In that regard, the Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Environment supported rural women through the Rural Development Programme 2014–2020. Under that Programme, rural women received financial support in order to boost their income and enhance their working conditions. Rural women under 40 years of age could obtain financial support and vocational training when they established an agricultural holding for the first time. Additional financial support was allocated to enable women to modernize their agricultural holdings, set up or improve small industrial units and process or produce traditional agricultural products. Rural women were able to participate in local action groups that aimed to improve the quality of rural life through the protection of the environment, the protection and promotion of folk culture and the promotion of rural areas as agritourism destinations. The Department of Agriculture provided vocational training in organic farming and traditional farming methods to rural women and men through the Agricultural Extension Programme.

*Articles 15 and 16*

43. **Ms. Halperin-Kaddari**, noting that the delegation had stated that unmarried couples who lived together were legally recognized and enjoyed the same rights as married couples, said that she would welcome clarification as to whether the recognition afforded to couples in de facto unions was separate from that granted to couples in civil unions under the Civil Union Law 2015. It would also be interesting to learn whether couples living in de facto unions were entitled to all the social benefits available to married couples and whether their property relations were regulated in the same way.

44. When couples divorced, the value that had been added to their property during the course of the marriage was assessed and divided between them. However, spouses who had not worked, or who had worked only on a part-time basis, were considered to have contributed only one third of the value added to the matrimonial property. In view of the unfairness of that arrangement, and its disproportionate impact on women, she asked whether the Government would amend the legislation in question to ensure that the value added to matrimonial property during a marriage was divided equally between the spouses, in accordance with the Committee's general recommendation No. 29 (2013). Noting that the Government had indicated its intention of carrying out a review of the legislation in question, she asked when any amendments resulting from the review would be adopted. It would be interesting to learn whether the property acquired during a marriage included career assets such as pension rights, severance payments and increased earning potential.

45. Women in Cyprus were sometimes adversely affected by the fact that the island was divided into two territories with separate legal regimes. Although the Committee acknowledged that the Government could not exercise any control over the occupied part of the island, it would be interested to learn whether any measures, including enhanced legal aid, had been implemented to mitigate the adverse impacts on women of the territorial division of Cyprus.

46. Noting that lesbian, bisexual and queer women were entitled to enter into civil unions under the Civil Union Law 2015, and that single women were able to conceive

children through artificial insemination, she asked whether the Government intended to amend the Law to address the fact that, as matters stood, the civil partners of lesbian, bisexual or queer mothers were not legally recognized as the second mother of children born to their partner.

47. **Ms. Koursoumba** (Cyprus) said that both religious and civil marriages were regulated by the laws of the State. Under the Civil Union Law, heterosexual or same-sex couples living in de facto unions could enter into a contract through which they declared that they were a couple and acquired all the rights enjoyed by married couples except for the right to adopt a child. Although the civil partners of mothers were not legally recognized as the second parent of their partner's children, the Government was undertaking consultations and considering whether to review the legislation relating to that issue.

48. The proposed amendments to the Family Law took into account all the recommendations made by the Committee in its previous concluding observations (CEDAW/C/CYP/CO/6-7). In accordance with those amendments, property acquired during a marriage would be divided in accordance with the law and not on the basis of a court decision. The amended legislation was expected to provide for the equal distribution of property acquired during a marriage.

49. The Government was unable to take any measures affecting the occupied part of the island. The delegation was unaware of any cases in which persons were subject to the jurisdiction of family courts in both the government-controlled territory and the occupied territory. However, there had been cases in which parents had abducted a child in the government-controlled area and left the island, with the child, via the occupied area. Unfortunately, there was little that the Government could do to prevent such situations from occurring.

50. **Ms.** Niki **Andreou** (Cyprus) said that all the findings of the inquiry into the economic consequences of divorce on both spouses had been taken into account in the proposed amendments to the Family Law. The amendments in question provided for consensual divorce, joint child custody, the consideration of the best interests of the child by family courts, the right of children to contact both parents following divorce and the equal distribution of property acquired during a marriage, among other measures.

51. **Ms. Halperin-Kaddari** said that she urged the Government to take into account the Committee's general comment No. 29 (2013) in respect of the sharing of matrimonial property in the event of divorce. In particular, the Committee recommended that the increased earning potential of spouses working outside the home should be included in the property acquired during a marriage and should be shared equally between the spouses in the event of divorce.

52. Noting that the proposed amendments to the Family Law favoured joint custody arrangements in which the children of divorced parents spent an equal amount of time with each parent, she urged the State party to consider evidence indicating that such arrangements were often highly problematic and had adverse consequences for women, particularly those exposed to a risk of violence. The State party should direct the courts to assess risks of domestic violence, whether it targeted the child or the mother, and take that risk into account when issuing decisions related to custody.

53. **Ms. Koursoumba** (Cyprus) said that no legislation would be adopted that did not provide for exceptions in cases where women or children faced a risk of domestic violence. The best interests of the child were always of paramount importance and were always considered by the courts. The right of children to be heard would be enhanced under the new legislation.

54. **Ms. Voskaridou** (Cyprus) said that legislation was being drafted to ensure that migrant women married to Cypriot citizens, or citizens of other European Union countries, enjoyed equal access to the law.

55. **Ms. Koursoumba** (Cyprus) said that, on behalf of the Government, the delegation wished to express its appreciation for the frank and all-encompassing dialogue, which gave the authorities an opportunity to reflect on the impact of the measures they had taken and to

reassess their contribution to ongoing efforts to promote gender equality and women's empowerment. The Committee could be assured that its recommendations would be given the serious consideration that they merited.

*The meeting rose at 4.50 p.m.*